

# Gleanings from 2 Timothy

by Fred Tomlinson

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*This sermon delves into the relationship between the Apostle Paul and Timothy, highlighting Paul's transformation from a persecutor to a promoter of the Christian gospel. It emphasizes the grace of God in choosing individuals, the responsibility of carrying the gospel, and the challenges of staying true to the faith amidst opposition. The sermon encourages listeners to be awakened to God's calling, to listen attentively, and to trust in God's provision for carrying out His work.*

**Scripture:** Acts 20:28, Hebrews 12:1, 2 Timothy 1:7, Isaiah 6:8, 1 Peter 4:10, Philippians 1:6, Psalm 139:5, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 26:3

**Topics:** "Grace and Transformation", "Faithfulness in Adversity"

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## Description

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## Transcript

It is a strange way to do it, but it's a pleasure all the same. Always a pleasure to share something from the Word of God. So, I think you've been made aware already that I think I call this little series we're doing here, Gleanings from 2 Timothy.

I'm not trying to work through it verse by verse or anything like that, but just to see how the Lord leads. I don't know what next week will look like precisely. So, this is the second precious epistle.

I'd like to spend this second session just remaining in the vestibule, as it were. Last week, I felt to just try to introduce the Apostle Paul freshly to us, just with a few comments. And I think what we saw there, if I can just recap this much, was the fact that Paul, the Apostle Paul, who was of course known as Saul, Saul of Tarsus, in his earlier life, he was a zealous persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ, because the church was a fledgling church at that point in time.

And Paul, I'll call him Paul, because that's how we know him, believed, I believe with absolute sincerity that he was doing the work and will of God in doing what he was doing. Of course, he was completely misguided. But this man who was this zealous persecutor of the church, became the greatest promoter of

the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Christian gospel.

This man who made havoc of Christ's body, and brought so much suffering and pain and anxiety to Christian men and women, ends up being a man who is nurturing the very church itself. And it's all very wonderful. I think the takeaway in my mind from our thoughts last week, were focused on the fact of the grace of God, taking into account this man's activities and efforts to bring destruction to the church in such a way, and yet transformed so remarkably.

This man who was before a blasphemer, he calls himself, and a person guilty of murder, he says, of the Christian people, becomes what he became by a miracle and by the grace of God. And it spoke to me in particular of the fact that he was chosen of God, not on the basis of anything about himself, he tells us plainly in other epistles, how he was chosen even before the foundation of the world, God didn't choose him because he was a good man. And God chose him because he chose to choose him.

And that's it. And because God chose him in that way, let me remind you that this is exactly how he deals with men and women today. He chooses whom he will, and we're not chosen on the basis of our successes or our great moral life, or anything of that sort.

And so as we flip that story over, by the same token, we're not rejected on the basis of anything about ourselves either. And this, to me, speaks of just God's great grace in choosing his people. And Paul will also teach us that no man, no woman naturally seeks the Lord.

Now you can read that in Romans chapter three, in verse 11, no one naturally seeks God. And therefore, if, and perhaps I'm speaking to someone in particular this morning, if you're tempted to wonder whether you're included in some way, or whether you're rejected, on the other hand, let me put it to you that the very fact that your heart is open to God right now, and that there is a measure of seeking of the Lord in your heart, that is proof positive that the Spirit of God has been moving in your life, and bringing you to this place and will continue to lead you on into the fullness of his purpose for you. Isn't that a wonderful thing that we can be reminded of? And it can be underscored in us that my desire for the Lord, my desire to know and understand the truths of the gospel are in my heart, because God has been moving in me and brought light to my understanding.

And what he has started, he will continue, and he will finish it perfectly. Amen. Let me just read the first five verses of the second epistle to Timothy.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. To Timothy, my beloved son, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears that I may be filled with joy.

And when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and in thy mother Eunice, I am persuaded that it is in thee also. Amen. I'll leave the reading at that point.

And, you know, as I read through this epistle, and it really is a wonderful, wonderful lesson, and I've no doubt that many of you, if not all of you have discovered that for yourselves already. But as I read here, I feel as though I'm on holy ground, in a very particular way, as I am able to, I don't know, have some insight

into just what was going on in the hearts of the two men in particular. Here, of course, the Apostle Paul, who is writing, and perhaps we'll talk some more on another occasion about his circumstances, except to say this, that he's in a hole in the ground, he's in a prison cell, that's damp and cold, and there's a stench, it's foul, everything is terrible about it.

And there's some record of this outside of the scriptures as well. But his mind, perhaps I'll just say this, he knows with certainty, it's the second time he's been in prison in Rome. But this time, he knows that he's not going to walk out physically alive, he knows that at any point in time, the executioner will come to the door and come in for him.

And yet, as we read this letter, we can't help but be impressed by the razor sharp mind he has, and the clarity of his thought is remarkable in the extreme. The total absence of any sense that he's sorry for himself, or he's to be pitied, there's nothing of that at all. He's clear, he remains on fire in his heart, and fully focused on the person of the Lord Jesus as his Savior and his Lord, and upon the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

And so much for him. On the other hand, we've got Timothy. And just if I can just take like an overview for a moment and say there's two particular concepts that seem to rise out of this epistle.

There's all the detail underneath these two words, really, which are two headings. And the first is relationship, and the other word is responsibility. And in this session, I will refer to these things very briefly, but they're going to come up again and again in one way or another as we continue through the study on other occasions, if we are able to be together in the future.

But this particular piece of correspondence that Timothy is holding in his hands will be Paul's final correspondence, as far as we are aware, at least. But his final letter, and his writing to Timothy. Timothy, a man possibly about 30 years younger than the Apostle Paul.

His mother was a Jew, a Jewess, and his father was a Gentile. And it's almost certain that Timothy was converted while in his hometown in Lystra. I'm just going to read from the book of Acts.

I can just find the passage here in chapter 14. And this, of course, is far earlier than the moment we're looking at in Second Timothy. But Paul is on his travels and ministering.

And he, I'm tempted to read more than I ought in this short time allocated to me, but the multitude are listening to the Apostle Paul, and they're divided. Part held with the Jews and part with the Apostles. And when there was an assault made, both of the Gentiles and also the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully and to stone them, they became aware of it and fled unto Lystra and Derb, cities of Lyconia, and unto the region that lies round about.

And there they preached the gospel. And there sat a certain man in Lystra, a man who was an invalid, and the story goes on to describe that. There's no reference here to Timothy, but we know that Timothy's from this community.

And I have no doubt in my mind, it can only be my opinion, but I have no doubt in my mind that Timothy listened to the Apostle Paul as he preached. And it further is my conviction that on that occasion, he responded to the ministry of the Apostle. The Apostle and his colleagues fled from that area.

And some years go by and we find ourselves now in the 16th chapter of the Book of Acts. And verse one reads like this, then came he to Derb and to Lystra. So he's returned again several years later to this same community.

And behold, a certain disciple was there named Timothy or Timotheus in the Old King James, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess and believed, but his father was a Greek. And concerning this man, Timothy, he was well spoken of, he was well reported of by his brethren that were in Lystra and Iconium. And then verse three says, him would Paul have to go forth with him.

And he takes him with him and travels with the Apostle Paul and became part, as time goes on, of the ministerial team, and so on. But that reminds us of this relationship, which started because of hearing the gospel through the Apostle. The Apostle here in our Timothy reference refers to Timothy as his dearly beloved son in the second verse I read to you earlier.

That is in the faith, he was like a son with his father. And there was developed clearly a deep and very permanent, very lasting relationship between these two men. I think I could say, naturally speaking, we, as men and women, we're all sight impaired in one way or another, I think.

We make our assessments and our judgments and our decisions based on information available to us and based also on our own understanding or our own response to whatever it is that's going on around us. And in so many cases, we jump to conclusions. And we rush to judgment on other things.

And on the other hand, we can be so incredibly dull and dismiss things rashly or carelessly. Some things we just put down to happen chance and coincidence. And in many cases, we can be blithely unaware of the fact that God is the sovereign God.

And this sovereign God is engineering and planning and ordaining things concerning our lives, he orders our steps, and he causes our paths to converge at perfectly appropriate times. And I'm saying this, as I think back, of course, to Timothy being in that meeting and the fact that certain things that happened in the life of the Apostle Paul, and they, they retreat to a certain area and come to this very town where Timothy is. And it can easily be put down to just happen chance.

It just that's, well, that's the way it was. But as the story unfolds, we can't help but recognize God was in this. And it could be as you're listening to me this morning, or evening, whatever time of the day it is for you right now, that this very morning, this very occasion, as you sit there, and as I'm here as well in my place, that this gathering, this moment is a divine appointment.

How easily we can just dismiss it as just, well, that's where we were, and such and such happened, or such and such body invited me or whatever it is. But I'm inviting you to choose to believe that God is ordering your steps. And his plan for your life is right on schedule.

And having said that, let me move back again. But I still have another thought in my mind here. I mentioned a while ago that there's possible 30 year difference in age between these two men.

We don't know with certainty, but that's the best estimates, I think. But Timothy saw something in that older man that was sufficient to cause him to leave his home and leave his family and follow that man. There are many other examples of this in scripture that we can find in the Old Testament, and certainly in the New Testament.

And it reminds me, and I mustn't go into any detail here, but it reminds me of an occasion many, many years ago now. I'm in the middle 1960s. Probably many of you weren't even born then.

But my young brother, who was, I think, 17 on the occasion, he went to a meeting, which was outside of the parameter of our Christian brethren assemblies, which was not usual to do. But he came back, and his heart was ablaze, and he was filled with the joy of what he believed had happened to him in the meeting where that man was speaking. But he tried to persuade me that I needed to respond, I needed to go, and I needed to listen.

I was totally against it, and with no holds barred, really. But one of the things he said to me comes to my mind here as I'm thinking about Timothy with the Apostle Paul. My brother said to me, Fred, he said, when I was in that meeting, I was listening to the man who was preaching, and he had white hair.

Now don't forget, my brother was 17. It was the city of the group, the Beatles. It was the time of young men dressing in the same way as they, and so on.

He was into that. But he said to me, Fred, he said, the man that was speaking had white hair, but more than anything else in the world, I wanted to be like that man. I think what he was saying now, without any question in my mind, was that he saw the very life of Jesus in that man.

It wasn't only what he was preaching with his mouth, but somehow his life and his posture spoke to him in such a way. Amen. For Timothy, that began, as I've said already, a lifelong relationship with the Apostle.

I'm turning my pages over in my Bible back to the book of Acts, but to chapter 20. By this point in time, Timothy, we are led to understand has a responsible role in the church in Ephesus. Paul is visiting Ephesus, for what will, so far as we understand, and as far as he understood at the time, to be his last occasion.

He calls the elders together. It doesn't mention Timothy's name here, but there's no doubt in my mind that Timothy was there in that group. He called them together.

He was just passing by, as it were, and stopped with the ship they were traveling on, and so they were on the seashore on this occasion. He calls the elders. They come together to meet with the Apostle, and he speaks to them.

It would be a sheer pleasure for me to read the whole section of the chapter, but I can't do that. But the Apostle closes his words in this particular way. He says in verse 36, he says, it records here, and when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all, and they all wept, saw, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face no more, and they accompanied him unto his ship.

And you remember in the reading earlier, as we read in 2nd Timothy, the Apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy at this late stage now, he says to Timothy, I can still remember your tears. Such was the relationship. This is what I'm trying to emphasize.

There was a relationship established by the grace of God between these two men, who in terms of age were quite separate, and separate for a number of other reasons, I'm certain. And yet God caused their paths to converge. He brought them both together in himself, that is in the Lord Jesus, and caused Timothy to become this important and quite key man in the life and experience of the Apostle, and in the

greater purpose of the gospel.

Amen. And I think this reference to the elders there, I find quite moving as I think of it, as they were together, that they loved the man. Isn't it a wonderful thing how God joins the hearts of men and women in a way that is, in some cases, so much richer and deeper than what we can find with people who are our relatives.

But somehow the grace of God working in the hearts of men and women who are privileged to know each other and come together, find something, find a witness, recognize that unique life that they commonly share together, that joins them for time and for eternity. Glory to God. And so this story continues to unfold.

And, you know, I've already made reference to the fact that Paul, in writing this letter, was in that death cell of his, but his mind and his heart is clear and focused. I've made some references to that. I dare say, in my imagination at least, that when Timothy was first reading this letter, he was in Ephesus and he's pouring over this mail that he's received.

And I would suspect that, once again, tears are blinding his eyes as the memories of the past years come flooding into his mind. That would be a very human response, I think, and I wouldn't doubt it. But I believe this, as both the men in their different situations, separated by a degree of time for the letter to get from the cell in Rome to Ephesus to Timothy's hands.

But as they both, whether it was Paul writing it or Timothy reading it, there would be one thing which would be so incredibly clear in their minds. And that would be that God had ordained that initial meeting, that meeting which would turn out to be pivotal in each of their lives and in the lives of countless others, even stretching right up to this present moment in time where we're looking at this this very letter. But God was in it.

Amen. And so, you know, I'd like to encourage you that everything in your life, and when I say everything, and I take this to myself, it's come to me before I've said it to you, but that everything, all of the events and circumstances of your life has been a preparation for this present moment. And if that is true, and if we're, our posture is to be listening for the word of God, then I think it behoves us to really pay attention.

What is it that God is saying? Let us not treat things blithely. Let's not just put it down. Well, this is just what we did because we wanted to see old friends or be with old friends again.

But let's believe that God is in charge of this situation. He's in charge of your life and mine. And he's ordered the circumstances to bring us to this moment where we're talking about these things and inviting God to speak to our hearts.

Amen. So for Paul and Timothy, they found this unique relationship. And it was to be a basis and cause for great blessing in their lives.

But you know, this moment in time for both of those men, and this moment in time for you and for me this morning, it was not merely a moment when correspondence was being written or correspondence was being read. It wasn't a moment for some kind of emotional stroll down memory lane for them. But this correspondence concerned a huge responsibility.

A huge responsibility was being handed over to the younger man, Timothy, on this occasion. And it's very plain to us as we read through any references to Timothy, even references here in these two epistles, first and second Timothy, that Timothy was a different man to Paul. He wasn't a Paul, if you like.

He was a different man. He couldn't be Paul. And so there's a question that is arising in the minds of Paul the Apostle as he's writing this letter.

He's got an enormous concern in his heart that the revelation of the which had been given to him uniquely. They didn't have a New Testament written as we do at this time. But this great truth, this revelation of the new covenant had been made available and made known to the Apostle Paul.

And he had experienced the benefit of it and continued to even into this moment. And he had preached it in the Holy Spirit and by the aid of the Holy Spirit. Time is changing now.

His concern is that nothing be lost of that great truth. And much more can and will be said about that, Lord willing, in the days ahead. But the baton is being handed to this man who is not a Paul.

But the responsibility would be incredibly heavy. The question would be, will Timothy be up to this challenge? He's going to be carrying this unique treasure. And the answer to that question is, without question, he could be up to it because of the provision of the Holy Spirit who enabled him.

But the question is, yes, that's true. He could be, but would he be? And would he grasp the truth with the kind of clarity that was in the Apostle's heart and mind? Would he tenaciously hold on to it? Would he grasp that baton, as it were, with all it represented and all it involved, with all of his heart? And would he run with it fearlessly and consistently through those dangerous days? And that was the challenge. And, you know, for every man and woman, for each of you listening to me this morning, and certainly for me myself, I add, for everyone that is truly called of God and sent of God, there is this treasure, this treasure which is called the gospel.

This treasure which first needs to be experienced in our own lives and in our own hearts, and also grasped and understood to be a divine responsibility. This is for you and for me. I have this responsibility, this divine responsibility to carry this gospel, as did Timothy, and to minister it.

We've talked about relationship. We're into this category of responsibility. It's responsibility with this precious truth that has been entrusted to us, as it was entrusted to Timothy.

We will see more about this in future weeks. But for now, just be sure that as the call of God is upon your life, this life that God is opening for you, it's not a time to just, as it were, stroll down some kind of memory lane. It's not a time, as we gather together here, to just think about the good old days and so on.

This life into which we are called is not a dance among the tulips at all. We're not to be under any illusions of this. This isn't just something that sort of oils the machine for our life in this world, and so that everything comes together nicely for us, and nothing goes wrong, and everything's sweet and wonderful.

That is to misunderstand the truth of the gospel, certainly. The apostle Paul was well aware, and I think, without doubt, Timothy was also aware of this by this time as he reads this letter, that the world, as today, this world is seeking seductively to steal us from our allegiance to, and our surrender to, and our love for the Lord Jesus and for the gospel. You know, lo and behold, we've even got preachers in these days that are guilty of distorting the gospel, or reducing it to some seemingly, an imaginary, unreducible minimum.

But in doing so, they're altering it, and causing it to cease to be the gospel. Every one of us are facing demonic wolves, as it were. Let me read to you again from Acts chapter 20, where the apostle is talking to those elders.

He says this in the 28th verse, he says, Take heed therefore unto yourselves, Timothy's listening to him, I think. Am I listening to him, or are you? Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples unto them. Therefore watch and remember, that by the space of three years I cease not to warn every one, night and day, with tears. This is what Paul was aware of.

Not merely that there was this truth, which was this transcendent treasure, but at the same time, there were enemies of all kinds of natures, that would seek to rip their testimony away, and distort this precious message of the gospel. And that is certainly happening, as we are together, even at this point in time. As the story unfolds, I believe Timothy would prove beyond any doubt, that he was up to it, and that he did discover the secret and the source to this godly life.

We heard earlier in this meeting, how that Peter talks about all things that pertain to living a godly life, have been made available to us. And Timothy discovered that, I am certain, and walked in the benefit and blessing of it. I think the big question, as I'm beginning to draw to a close here, is the question, what about you? You know, are you up to it? I wonder if I could ask you, are you being awakened, freshly awakened to the things of God? Because I believe, as I said earlier, that God has engineered circumstances, so that we would be together, and we would be thinking along these lines this morning, that God is beginning to reveal something into your heart, concerning how the earlier pieces of your life, and of the situations and issues, are somehow all beginning to fit together.

Things are beginning to come into focus, and we're beginning to realize freshly, that God has begun something in each one of our lives, regardless of how long we've been on this journey, which, by his unique means of corresponding with us, of speaking to us, he is seeking to bring it together into focus, and bring us onto a more sure and certain ground, that that which he has begun, he will be careful to complete. Amen. Another big question is, are you listening? Is your ear open? Is your heart ready? It was Jim Elliott, many years ago, many of you will have read concerning him.

He wrote this in his journal, he said, he is no fool, who gives what he cannot keep, his life, who gives what he cannot keep, to what he cannot lose. There's another one of his quotes, that I've repeated many times over the years, let me do it one more time. He says, first of all, and he's writing in his journal, he's not preaching to a group, for any kind of applause from anyone, he's just at home, somewhere, writing in his journal, and he starts by quoting a verse from the book of Hebrews, he said, he makes his ministers a flame of fire, and then he goes on to say, God, make me thy fuel flame of God.

He said, deliver me from the dread asbestos of other things, and pour upon me the oil of your spirit, that I may be a flame. But a flame is transient, and often short-lived, canst thou bear this, O my soul? In me there dwells the spirit of the great short-lived, make me thy fuel flame of God. Amen.

Well, we'll proceed, Lord willing, when we gather together in the future. The story just continues, it's wonderful, and we want to learn more and more about this transcendent call of God to men and women, this incredible privilege, this greatest joy, and we want to understand more about the treasure itself, and I trust that God will help us. Can I just share something that I never thought for a moment I would share just now? I'm almost embarrassed sharing because it's very personal, really, but just a few days ago, we got a letter from one of our granddaughters who was married with her own family, and one of her little boys, she's got three, were here in our house, I don't know how long ago, a month was it, or longer, I don't know, and he picked up one of the little tracts that I've written, entitled Jesus Knows Your Name, and he took it home, and I didn't know anything about this until just a day or two ago, but evidently he keeps all these little treasures in bed with him, and so he's had that text in bed with him for this period of time since he received it, but just the night before last, or two nights ago, as his mum was tucking him in for the night, he had the tract and he said, will you read it to me? And so she read it to him, and then he said, I want to ask Jesus into my heart, and so she had the joy of praying for him there and then.

I suppose, really, I'm sharing this because it's very precious to me and to our family, but it seems to highlight what I was saying earlier, how that, you know, the fact that he took one of my tracts home with him on that day, God knew what was happening, we didn't, he just wanted some bits to take home with him that were here, and let that be a lesson to each one of us, the things that seem to be of no real significance, when God is involved in our lives, everything is of significance, every situation, everything that we're listening to here is by his spirit and it's for his glory and for the benefit of our own lives and those lives that we will touch in due course. Thank you and God bless you all. Amen.

I thought it was appropriate in the current climate as well, stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blessed, finding as he promised, perfect peace and rest. Free. Perfect yet it floweth, fuller every day.

Perfect yet it groweth, deeper all the way. Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest, finding as he promised, perfect peace and rest. Hidden in the hollow of his blessed hand, never foe can follow, never traitor stand.

Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care, not a blast of hurry, touch the spirit there. Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest, finding as he promised, perfect peace and rest. Every joy or trial falleth from above, traced upon our dial by the son of love.

We may trust him fully, all for us to do. They who trust him wholly, find him wholly true. Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest, finding as he promised, perfect peace and rest.

Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest, finding as he promised, perfect peace and rest. Amen.

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